

Buckinghamshire Business First



YOUR LOCAL GROWTH HUB



87 NEW BUSINESSES FOR EVERY 10,000 RESIDENTS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE



30,310 REGISTERED BUSINESSES



Supporting growth, prosperity and success in Buckinghamshire



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Executive Summary

What We Are About

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) exists to support and facilitate success within the business community in our county and to ensure that success is sustainable.

Our mission is to foster the conditions that encourage businesses to invest, grow and thrive in Buckinghamshire. We exist to make a positive difference to Buckinghamshire's existing businesses and new start-ups.

Driving Growth and Prosperity

We work to encourage net jobs growth in the county. We operate on the principle that proactive jobs creation generates business growth, and *vice versa*.

BBF works to create a dynamic environment that drives the growth of businesses in our county, recognised as "The Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain".

UK's First Non-City Growth Hub

We are proud to have been recognised by central Government as the first non-city growth hub in the UK, an accolade that will stand us in good stead for achieving our goals for the year ahead.

Growth Hubs are intended to drive growth by bringing coherence to the business support landscape and improving awareness, understanding and accessibility of the support available in the local area.

BBF's role in bringing together the collective voice of Buckinghamshire's businesses is going to continue to be a central feature of the ongoing growth agenda.

We will continue to foster the strong, mutually beneficial relationship between public policy makers and the Buckinghamshire business community.



Alex Pratt
BBF Chairman

"The year ahead is going to be challenging as the economy continues its gradual improvement. To achieve our goals, we must remain resolutely focused on jobs growth in the county."

Our Priorities for 2015 - 2016

We have set ourselves targets for the year ahead that will capitalise on the momentum we have already generated since BBF was formed in March 2011.

Our priorities will be to realise:

- 500 new jobs created
- 1,750 businesses assisted
- 8,000 BBF member businesses
- £1,500,000 value of grants distributed
- £3.8 million GVA* growth

We will make sure we address the key challenges faced by businesses in the areas of skills, property, finance, infrastructure and business support. These are the issues that businesses tackle most often and our expertise will be mobilised to help them.

We will continue making a difference and being the positive force that contributes to driving Buckinghamshire's economy.

Being The Force For Change

BBF will continue to use our collective voice to ensure the Government allows businesses to have a place at the table when discussions take place about issues that affect county businesses.

BBF will continue to invest its energy and resources in facilitating business growth which will underpin prosperous healthy communities. It is a well-known fact that being in work is a major driver of health and community cohesion in general.

We will support the private sector to grow and deliver more jobs for local residents which will further increase Buckinghamshire's significant net contributions to the Exchequer. We will carry on re-enforcing the clear and unequivocal link between wealth creation and the quality of life enjoyed by Buckinghamshire residents.

We will use our collective experience and expertise to build growth that is sustainable.



Philippa Batting
BBF Managing Director

“BBF’s focus areas for the year ahead are to ensure active dialogue with the business community, free and open knowledge exchange, raising funding for distribution to businesses and growing the number of new jobs.

“Together, we can make it happen.”

* Gross Value Added (GVA) is used by Government to measure the overall economic wellbeing of an area. In broad terms it is generated by people in work and is quantified in terms of wages and company profits. Increases in GVA are primarily achieved through increases in the number of people in employment or increases in the productivity of people in work.

Supporting Businesses

We use an array of methods to support the business community, all focused on ensuring that we signpost businesses to all the support they need, which has become a core competence of BBF.

We will maintain our philosophy of inclusive engagement and working in collaboration to ensure that all our stakeholders are involved and that their respective needs and specialisms are recognised. Our belief, that working in collaboration is more effective than working alone, will remain a firm BBF principle.

Keeping ourselves connected to both the business community and the various sources of business support is critical for BBF's success. We will expand our network further as we manage interactions with businesses through all forms of communication.

We will continue to act as a facilitator for high-quality sources of external help and advice for all businesses that will benefit from it. We will proactively seek new businesses that would benefit from BBF, thereby growing the base of recipients of our services and also strengthening the collective business voice for Buckinghamshire. BBF's role as a 'first stop shop' for business

enquiries for the county is a position that we will strengthen and promote even further. We will maintain effective relationships with statutory organisations, local providers and stakeholders, so that we continue to have our finger on the pulse of the most relevant information and support available for businesses.

Our physical facilities, such as our Hub areas, will continue to provide ideal venues for workshops, meetings, work spaces and networking events.

Our research and data analysis activities will continue to ensure that we have the latest relevant information for our members, local authorities and all other stakeholders. BBF will seek to be evidence based in all our strategic decisions.



Investment

Promotion of inward investment will remain a key activity for BBF in the year ahead. We want businesses to select Buckinghamshire as their location of choice. Attracting investment to the county will help our aim of promoting and supporting apprenticeships and generating new jobs. It will further enhance the county's status as the entrepreneurial heart of Britain, from which businesses want to trade.

The year ahead for BBF promises to be an exciting one and we are ready for the challenges we face. By working together, we can ensure we keep Buckinghamshire at the top of the league table for business.

**6TH HIGHEST
PRODUCTIVITY RATE
OUT OF THE 139 LOCAL
ECONOMIES IN THE UK**

The Big Picture: Our Purpose and Function

Vision for Buckinghamshire

We want to see a Buckinghamshire economy that leads the way in:

- prosperity
- competitiveness
- attractiveness to inward investment

We want Buckinghamshire to be viewed as a model for others to follow, a Buckinghamshire in which the economy thrives with a fully engaged business community, proud to be the Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain.

BBF exists to support and facilitate success in Buckinghamshire's business community and to ensure that success is sustainable.

Our Mission

Our mission is to foster the conditions that encourage businesses to invest, grow and thrive in Buckinghamshire.

We provide the crucial link between county businesses and national and local Government. We act as a megaphone for businesses to communicate with central Government. Single business voices will be heard via the amplifier effect that BBF creates through listening to all businesses. A single business voice becomes part of the collective voice that BBF creates.



Our Values: What we Stand For

Succeeding Together

For us, this means:

- working together with consideration and respect for each other
- having a strong ethos of sharing and consultation
- taking responsibility for our actions
- taking pride in our achievements

Openness and fairness

We espouse these by:

- behaving with integrity
- treating each other as equals
- recognising every individual's strengths
- using our talents and resources wisely

Making a Difference

We make a tangible positive difference to the people and businesses that we serve by:

- generating opportunities and ideas for Buckinghamshire businesses
- creating personal contacts with specialists who provide targeted expertise for business owners
- pursuing our mission with passion and enthusiasm
- maintaining the respect and confidence of our funders and stakeholders
- spreading best practices and knowledge for the benefit of our members

We are driven by our determination to bring benefits to Buckinghamshire businesses, funders, local authority partners and individuals. Businesses of any size can take advantage of our function as a channel to expertise and support.

Delivering Value

We want to continue the success we have already demonstrated by:

- delivering value for Buckinghamshire businesses
- delivering value for our partners and funders
- further increasing our stakeholders' confidence in our ability to add value and generate positive outputs
- maintaining ourselves as the 'first stop' organisation to which businesses turn when seeking advice on all matters related to growth, support and business sustainability



BBF exists to make a positive difference to Buckinghamshire businesses and new start-ups

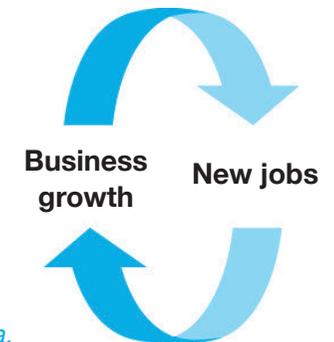
Our Pledges to Our Stakeholders

We are driven by our determination to bring benefits to our business members, funders, local authority partners and individuals considering starting new businesses.

We pledge to:

- always deliver on our promises
- show enthusiasm, passion and knowledge
- focus on solutions, not problems
- use straightforward, accessible language
- evidence all claims of performance
- maintain our reputation as an effective partner and a 'safe pair of hands'

We operate on the principal that prospectively working to create more jobs generates business growth, and vice versa.



How We WILL Operate

- We will be evidence-led in all our reporting
- We will be driven by the needs of businesses
- Our work will generate momentum through innovation and an enterprising approach
- We will keep asking questions so that we always know what matters most to businesses, our partners and our funders
- We will seek opportunities to capitalise on our own and others' strengths
- Sharing knowledge and latest learning will remain important to us
- Our team will be honest, straightforward and open with feedback for the benefit of improvement
- We will maintain high standards
- We will continue to encourage businesses, our partners and funders to become involved in our activities, so that we grow our collective intellectual capital

How We WILL NOT Operate

- We will not be afraid to speak up for economic development against political opposition
- Our work will not duplicate what is already available elsewhere
- We will not commit to doing more than we can deliver
- We will not undertake any activities or projects that do not add value to our core purposes
- Our communication will not be ambiguous
- We will not hold back when we see opportunities to bring benefit and unlock potential within the Buckinghamshire business community
- We will avoid keeping knowledge and information to ourselves when it needs to be pushed out to the people through whom it can generate value
- We will not over-complicate our team structure and organisational practices, which would detract from the clarity of our purposes

We are set on the right path for achieving real benefits for Buckinghamshire's businesses, at the right times and in the right ways to achieve desired outcomes and prosperity.



“Being a member of Buckinghamshire Business First has been great for our organisation on a number of levels; most importantly because we now have a true feel for what’s going on in the county, and how we can either influence what’s happening or benefit from it.”

Our Track Record

BBF has acted as the collective business voice for the county since our formation in March 2011. The creation of the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) in January 2012 has resulted in the creation of a Strategic Economic Plan for Buckinghamshire. BBF provides essential business support, communication and data gathering functions for BTVLEP.

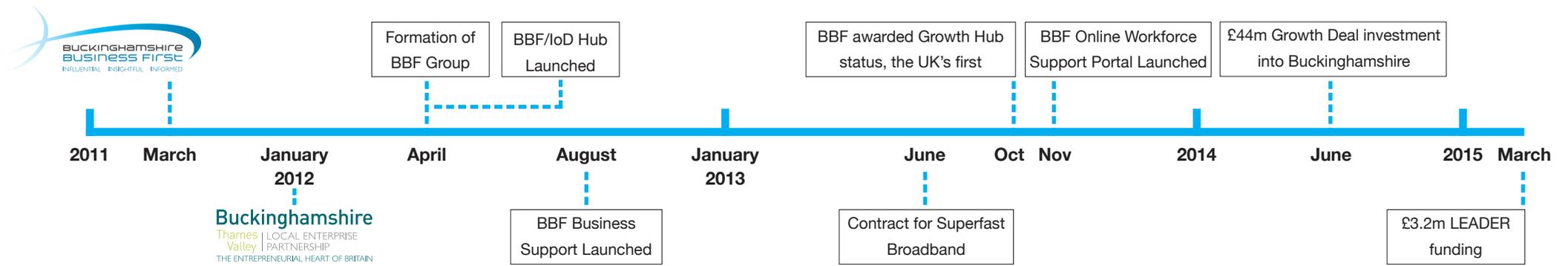
Within the BBF Group we have, courtesy of our merger in 2012, a distinct strategic asset in the form of Ngage, the expert consultancy and support organisation that helps to win and deliver UK and European funded projects and programmes. This expertise enables us to support businesses in bid submissions, run projects and tender for funding to be distributed to Buckinghamshire businesses.

BBF and Ngage operate as one, whereby Ngage brings funding for the benefit of BBF members, drawn from national and EU sources.

Ngage has secured €100m of European funding to support businesses and has managed a number of invaluable programmes of business support, such as Sustainable Routes, Leader, Eco Innovation, Low Carbon Workspaces, Broadband Connectivity and Woodland Improvement Grants, with various new projects currently in development.

Whitehall’s recognition of BBF as the country’s first non-city Growth Hub was a very significant milestone in October 2013. The Government supports BBF in its endeavours to provide a first stop shop for businesses in the County. Where gaps are identified BBF will be able to bid for a fund provided by government to support growth operations.

Since April 2011 our membership numbers have rocketed to over 6,000 representing 50% of Buckinghamshire’s private sector workforce and we have provided direct business support to over 5,900 businesses. As our membership continues to grow and as we gain further momentum, our intention is to assist more and more businesses per week.



Forward From a Strong Position

We have set our sights on delivering even more benefits and becoming THE ‘first stop’ organisation to which Buckinghamshire businesses turn when seeking advice on all matters related to growth and business sustainability.

Feedback and statistics show that we have performed very well, but....

....we now need to keep moving forward and pressing for even better results.

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) in Figures: Since 2012...

11 businesses make up our board	20,000 homes and businesses have access to superfast broadband	£7.77m has been paid in grants directly to businesses	5,948 businesses have directly benefited from our business support services
Over 6,000 members and growing continuously	Over 23,500 BBF articles read by members, partners and funders since 2012	Av. 150 companies use our Chesham and Saunderton Hub meeting room and business facilities every month	1,497 new jobs have been created
50% of the county’s private sector employees are in companies that are BBF members	2,200 attendees at events hosted by BBF to network and share knowledge	94% customer satisfaction (John Lewis (our heroes) 90.8%)	3,500 Avg. unique visits to the BBF website each month
3,200 Twitter followers and over 1,500 retweets in 2014	7 grant funding programmes currently available to businesses grow	1.2m tonnes of CO ₂ has been saved through our low carbon projects	458 young people have been supported to start their careers in Buckinghamshire

Looking to the Year Ahead

The year ahead will be challenging as the economy continues its struggle to grow. We must ensure that businesses receive the support they need. We know that aiming high will be the best way to continue mobilising the expertise, passion and commitment of our team and also the best way to achieve the progressive gains in output benefits that we seek to produce.

Headline Key Performance Indicators for 2015 / 16

	<p>We will ensure 500 new jobs are created. This will be via projects and also with a greater emphasis on inward investment and bringing new skills, ideas and investment to Buckinghamshire.</p>
	<p>We will assist 1,750 businesses. This will build on the benefits that we have been able to bring to businesses since the launch of the BBF business support service.</p>
	<p>We have our sights set on increasing our membership to 8,000 by March 2016, which is part of our five-year strategy to grow to 10,000 members by 2017. Our aspiration is to have a cohesive membership always ready to input into any debate with a business perspective.</p>
	<p>We will distribute grants with a total value of £1,500,000. This will be affected by the phasing of programmes that are nearing completion, such as 'Leader', so we will seek new projects to act as conduits for channelling grants.</p>
	<p>We will grow Gross Value Added by £3.8million.</p> <p><small>* Gross Value Added (GVA) is used by Government to measure the overall economic wellbeing of an area. In broad terms it is generated by people in work and is quantified in terms of wages and company profits. Increases in GVA are primarily achieved through increases in the number of people in employment or increases in the productivity of people in work.</small></p>

**Addressing The Challenges:
Buckinghamshire Businesses' Need**

Our research base has identified the key challenges businesses in Buckinghamshire feel they face. We provide access to the numerous sources of expertise from which businesses can benefit. BBF plays a central role in helping businesses to address the challenges.

Our ongoing research activities keep us at the forefront of regional and national trends, so we can advise at any time on the direction of travel for most of the main business sectors. We research the implications to our members of forthcoming Government initiatives and we put our members in touch with the support they need as and when it is available.



Rupert Waters
Head of Economic Research

“I lead our research activities and it’s my job to ensure we gather all the evidence we need to draw meaningful conclusions, including about what our businesses tell us they need.”

Key Challenges Faced by Buckinghamshire Businesses

	<p>On skills, businesses want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To increase the efficiency of recruiting the right people for the job - More energised young people leaving full-time education better prepared for the work environment - More Buckinghamshire graduates to return to the county after graduation
	<p>On property, businesses want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased choice of commercial property options - A supportive, efficient planning environment - A clear, dynamic picture of available property and terms - More affordable housing
	<p>On finance, businesses want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More flexible alternative sources of funding - A longer term, less risk-averse attitude to lending
	<p>On infrastructure, businesses want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High speed and reliable broadband connectivity across the entire county - Reduced traffic congestion in and around town centres - Improved access to the national rail network
	<p>On business support, businesses want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to peer-level, “been there, done that” mentoring - Access to a powerful, connected leadership network

Benefits To Stakeholders



Benefits to Businesses

- Unique access to local and national policy-makers
- BBF works with politicians in collaboration to generate a strong business case for strategic economic decisions
- BBF fosters conditions that help businesses to survive and thrive
- BBF actively seeks improvements that encourage economic growth, such as:
 - > improved infrastructure
 - eg. high-speed broadband
 - > easier access to finance for growing businesses
 - > more enterprising young people with greater employability
- Members benefit from our free relevant and informative newsletter and our free quality hub facilities

Two-way interaction with co-ordination
by Buckinghamshire Business First

Benefits to Other Stakeholders

- A single point of reference to reach 'the collective voice of business'
- Deeper and more widespread access to the views of the county's business community than was possible previously. The business intelligence network includes:
 - > The Buckinghamshire Business Group; a growing membership database; Institute of Directors; Federation of Small Businesses; Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce
 - > Mobilisation of the business community in support of important issues
 - > Tangible support in achieving the crucial aim of net jobs growth
 - > A source of credible and reliable research that underpins decisions with evidence

Board Members

Alex Pratt OBE, *Chairman*
 Founder, Serious Brands Ltd

Michael Garvey, *Vice Chair Infrastructure Lead*
 Managing Director, Stupples and Chandler Garvey

Philippa Batting, *Managing Director*

Adam Stronach, *Treasurer*
 Director, Harwood Hutton Limited

David Pritchard,
 Partner, Manches LLP

Elizabeth Adlington
 CEO, Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

Martin Reed
 Chairman and Chief Executive, Thomas International UK Ltd

Andrew Smith
 Director of Strategy and Communications,
 Pinewood Studios Group

Rob Spurrett
 Managing Director, ComDev Europe Limited

Guy Lachlan
 Owner, Jones and Cocks

Ruth Farwell, *Retired 2015*
 Vice Chancellor & CEO, Bucks New University

Lisa Williams, *Relocated 2015*
 Managing Director, John Lewis Home & Leisure,
 High Wycombe



The BBF Board of Directors and Senior Management Team are made up of key people with significant experience in entrepreneurial capacities and in team leadership roles. Biographies of these team players are available on the BBF website under ‘About BBF’.

Supporting Businesses: Realising Growth

Providing Support

We use our expertise and knowledge to signpost businesses to the support they need in various ways:

- acting as a facilitator for high-quality sources of external help and advice, enabling businesses to exploit opportunities
 - proactively seeking businesses that would benefit from interaction with BBF
 - identifying new sources of support which will benefit local businesses
 - encouraging engagement between the business and education communities
 - maintaining effective relationships with statutory organisations, local providers and stakeholders
 - providing a telephone, online and face-to-face business support service;
 - acting as a 'first stop' for business enquiries from across the county
 - provision of grant funding which will enable business growth
- providing workshops and networking events for identified issues concerning businesses, such as marketing, finance, employment issues, training-related issues, business planning, market research, changes in legislation, etc
 - issuing regular newsletters to share knowledge and legislative updates with the business community
 - promoting business-to-business offers amongst our membership
 - seeking tendering opportunities relating to securing funding for business support
 - providing a point of contact for employment and skills activities for partners, stakeholders, employers and BBF staff
 - providing a 'skills and recruitment' service for employers
 - providing a 'first stop' for workforce support enquiries from across the county



Heather Dean
Head of Skills
& Business Support

“We provide essential business support capability through our expertise in funding, bidding and identifying key business requirements. I’m passionate about strengthening our positive influences even more.”

The ethos of our business support activities is to be proactive rather than reactive. We seek opportunities for identifying businesses that would benefit from our support and new ways of supporting businesses already benefiting from interactions with us.

Support for new businesses

In 2014, we established 'Start In Bucks' a programme for new business owners and the self-employed.

The offer includes:

- voluntary business mentors from across the county
- facilitated start-up workshops
- hot-desking facilities in BBF hubs
- personal (rather than business) membership of BBF
- networking events
- member-to-member offers specifically for start-ups
- Growth Accelerator workshops
- online forums

We tailor our specific activities to generate the greatest benefits to the businesses that we support.



“Lovely setting, polished presenters, delicious food, very impressed!”

“Very useful and great presentations”

“As I’m right at the start of my journey, I found this a comfortable starting point”

The Hub of the Matter

Our hub model, whereby we make our space available to businesses for flexible working, such as at Saunderton and Chesham, is one that we aim to see extended across the county.

At Saunderton, we provide free meeting rooms, hot desks, PCs, wi-fi, Sky News, newspapers and journals. The Bistro Café is also available for tea, coffee and snacks to see you through the day or to provide refreshments for your guests.



Our hubs at Saunderton and Chesham are ideal for meetings and flexible working in the BBF environment, with access to the people who know how to find help for businesses.

Working in Collaboration

We work in collaboration with a variety of partners, which means we all benefit jointly from our combined expertise. Consequently, Buckinghamshire businesses benefit from the collective experience they can access through BBF as a result of our links with relevant organisations and support programmes.

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) is a customer of BBF by virtue of a funding agreement for economic development.



Our relationships with organisations such as UK Trade & Investment and Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, for example, ensure that we have access to the mechanisms for attracting investment. The BBF model is based on nurturing our already great relationships with relevant organisations so that mutual benefits are maximised.

It is vital for our success to keep ourselves connected to the business community, the various business representative organisations (BROs)¹ and national support services². This ensures we maintain our position as the 'first stop' for businesses seeking support.

Others With Whom We Work

We work with a range of other partners to ensure we keep ourselves fully updated with latest developments on the business support landscape. Some examples are depicted here, but there are many more.



¹ Examples of business representative organisations: Institute of Directors, Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses

² Examples of national support organisations: Growth Accelerator, UK Trade & Investment, Manufacturing Advisory Service

Capitalising On A Unique Position

BBF has gained formal recognition by central Government as the UK's first non-city Growth Hub. This accreditation reflects the Government's commitment to supporting us in bringing coherence to the business support landscape and improving awareness, understanding and accessibility of all the support, both national and local, available in our county.

To take advantage of this unique position, we are strengthening our 'first stop' principle, whereby we improve coordination, raise awareness and increase uptake of local and national business support by providing a single, local point of access for all businesses wishing to take advantage of support in business, innovation or trade to help them grow.

Where we identify gaps in the current provision of support to meet business needs in Buckinghamshire, we will work to create bespoke business, innovation and trade support to plug those gaps.

Ours is a vast network of contacts in all manner of business support realms, to whom our members have access through our experience in matching needs and expertise. We maintain engagement with businesses as a core thread through all of our work and at all times.

30,310
REGISTERED
BUSINESSES

We are specialists in signposting businesses to all the support they need. We are able to do this because we make sure we understand businesses' requirements in detail and we uncover everything we need to know about their services before we direct them to relevant sources of support.

Inward Investment

We work to attract inward investment to the county. There are presently over 700 foreign-owned businesses in Buckinghamshire and we want this number to grow so that new investment and new jobs are brought to our county, which will benefit everyone. This in no way detracts from our steadfast support for local businesses of all sizes from one-person businesses upwards.

Securing high-quality mobile inward investment projects will help us develop the number of mid-sized and large businesses in Buckinghamshire.

“In the couple of months since our move to Buckinghamshire, our business has grown incredibly, by over 50%.”

Mark Walker,
Ashridge Security Management

The strategy for securing investment is to:

- push the case that the productivity per head in Buckinghamshire is 40% higher than in the UK’s cities
- better present the economic potential of Buckinghamshire to the EU and other investors
- pro-actively seek inward investment into the county
- better align local and national resources with local economic priorities



Philippa Batting
BBF Managing Director



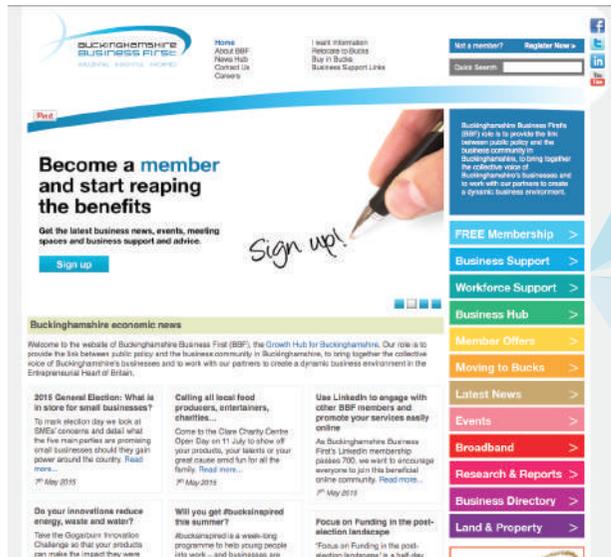
Launch of Takeda’s new headquarters in Woburn Green. A £19 billion Japanese pharmaceutical company.

700+ FOREIGN COMPANIES CHOOSE TO HAVE THEIR EUROPEAN HEAD OFFICES IN BUCKINGHAMHIRE



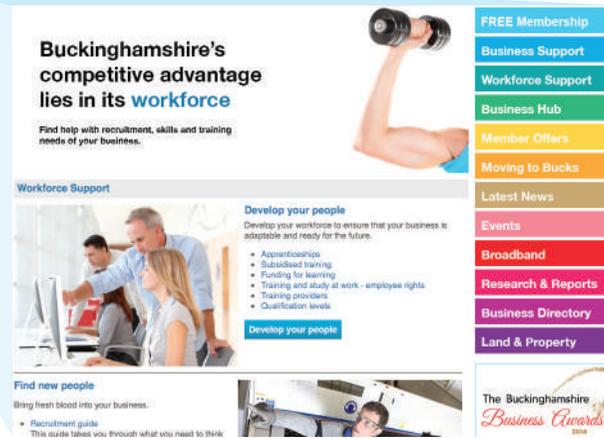
Our Web Site: A Mine of Information

The BBF web site provides an invaluable range of essential knowledge for new and growing businesses. Two of many examples are the Business Support and Workforce Support pages of the site.



Business Support

This is the collection of pages that provide essential information on how businesses can tap into the wide range of practical support available via BBF.



Workforce Support

This section offers access to support in developing people, including recruitment, talent management, apprenticeships, training and qualifications.

Growth Hub Portal

In 2015/16 Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) aims to build a thriving and dynamic online community, marketplace and business support environment for use by businesses based in or trading in Buckinghamshire.

This 'Growth Hub Portal' will also function as a procurement portal for private and public sector opportunities and will encourage the principle of keeping business local to Bucks. It is intended that businesses will be able to promote themselves via their own 'shop window' and find suppliers and new contracts in addition to upskilling themselves on how to apply for public sector opportunities. The Growth Hub Portal will be supported by an enhanced suite of business support materials provided by BBF for members along with a proactive support package to include networking opportunities, meet the supplier events, workshops and personal one-to-one support from experienced business support advisors.

It is intended that much of the content and functionality from the existing website (www.bbf.uk.com) will be kept, and enhanced to deliver personalised content and greater value for our member businesses.

We have been working closely with our local authority partners who recognise the need for collaboration and simpler processes when it comes to public procurement. We are committed to making change happen and helping our members become contract ready.



MPs Briefing - Public Procurement

The Growth Hub Portal will:

- Support BBF in achieving its target of 10,000 members by the end of 2016-17.
- Provide an income stream through the introduction of added value services for members.
- Encourage businesses in Bucks to trade with each other and specifically to make more of the public sector opportunities available to the Buckinghamshire local business community.

**63P OF EVERY £1
SPENT WITH A LOCAL BUSINESS
GOES BACK INTO THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

Compelling Evidence: The Research

The Team

BBF research team informs policy-making across Buckinghamshire. The team is led by Rupert Waters, Head of Economic Research, who is an economic geographer and town planner with 20 years’ research and consultancy experience gained across the public, private and university sectors.

Established County Credentials

Our research work is essential in our continuing development of data that provide the evidence for our claims that Buckinghamshire is a premier county worthy of accelerated investment.



Rupert Waters
Head of Economic Research

“We keep our finger on the pulse of business priorities in Buckinghamshire and beyond. Our research initiatives generate vital information.”

Objectives

Throughout 2015-16, BBF’s research team will provide the evidence for policy and evoke interventions. We will lead policy development across disciplines throughout Buckinghamshire by the production and analysis of data, provide expert advice on economic issues and secure prominent space in local media.

Research is currently distributed by mailing list, direct targeting of parties likely to be interested and through the BBF website. In the coming year, bulletins will be converted to press releases with comment from BBF board members and research team members to raise the profile of the BBF research function.

The team will continue to embrace public speaking opportunities, particularly those at which the private sector will be well represented. We will continue working with the BTVLEP in mutually beneficial ways and also with other partners, as appropriate.

How Our Work Is Used

Our research outputs serve various purposes for local businesses and regional and central government, including the following examples:

	<p>Demographic surveys We research data that inform understanding of people’s needs and profiles, used by business and politicians.</p>
	<p>Land reviews Our work provides invaluable information about land use and regional effects of policy changes on businesses.</p>
	<p>Economic studies We research economic impacts and benefits that help businesses make plans.</p>
	<p>Government policy updates We keep businesses updated on policy and we advise policy-makers.</p>

Enabling from Within: The Infrastructure

Information Technology

Our IT infrastructure is a vitally important enabler in our service delivery and it must be as effective and efficient as possible.

We will continue to focus on the infrastructure that allows most flexibility whilst minimising the risk of downtime. To this end in 2015/6 we will revisit the introduction of a hosted telephony solution that supports working from multiple locations including home working. Our hosted desktop solution will receive further upgrades including the release of Office 2013.

Our aim is to operate in an increasingly flexible, resilient and productive manner.

It is essential that we use the best tools for the tasks we undertake and to update and manage them for greatest output benefits.



Sarah Randall
*Head of operations
& MI Systems*

“The feedback we receive confirms that we provide a great service and I will continue working with my team to make sure that our operations remain cost-effective, relevant and timely for the benefit of all our stakeholders. This will be important because my team is the enabler for the rest of BBF to deliver on our promises.”

Investing In Our People

In 2014/15 we successfully achieved the re-accreditation of the Investors in People (IiP) standard. This was a significant achievement which recognises and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to investing in our people along with having a supportive and capable HR function.

Quote from John Hutchison, IiP Assessor (IiP Scotland)

“The BBF Group is led by an inspirational and engaging leader resulting in a responsive, agile and engaged team.”

In 2014/15 we also undertook the Thomas International Engage survey to assess our employee engagement. We were very proud to see that we were above the UK benchmark in the Overall Engagement measure as well as the sub measures of Relationships, Role and Reward. 2015/16 will see us to continue to build on these employee engagement activities to ensure we maintain this excellent standard.

We are continuing to streamline our HR policies and procedures and to establish a ‘paperless’ HR function which ensures all documents are uploaded to our online cloud based HR system. This not only supports the efficient delivery of the HR function but also reduces the storage requirements and associated costs.

Building with the Best Tools

Our business data is a significant asset and now that we have completed the harmonisation of the two CRM systems we will direct our efforts into further developing this through the purchase of new data and ensuring the right processes are in place to continuously maintain the data through our customer facing staff.

We will be making some enhancements to our CRM system to make it as easy as possible to keep it updated following a phone call or meeting with a business customer or stakeholder. We will develop two new online forms (that work like an app) which will facilitate this. The forms will allow the upload of key information and deliverables via a mobile device or tablet either during the meeting or immediately afterwards. The form will work from a mobile or tablet and acts as an ‘app’ to collect meeting notes and actions on the go. We will develop two of these – one for capturing business advise and another for capturing stakeholder engagement meetings.



Sharing Knowledge

We must ensure that we continue to provide relevant, timely and meaningful information to our members and other stakeholders and also that we gain from others’ knowledge at all opportunities. This is how we will continue to provide the service upon which we have built our reputation.

Sharing knowledge in all forms is one of the most critical activities any business needs to undertake, both internally and with external parties. We support the view that knowledge is power, but only if the knowledge is shared with the people who will benefit from it.

Our philosophy is to push knowledge out at the earliest opportunity to the people who need it.

We have the cultural mindset for knowledge sharing, the structure in place to support it and the technology we need to facilitate it. Our people are focused on delivering the service to realise our mission and we constantly review our knowledge requirements to satisfy the needs of our stakeholders.

Understanding Businesses

A fundamental cornerstone to achieving our vision, mission and objectives is to ensure we understand more and more about the business community in Buckinghamshire.

Our weekly e-newsletter to members and our other e-marketing activities will contribute to this through the provision of the 'click-through' data from these campaigns. Collectively, these will give us increasingly refined insights into the challenges faced by Buckinghamshire businesses. We will also be able to improve our targeting and messaging since we will have a continuous feedback loop, informing and directing future business activities and marketing messages.



Lynsey Dunn
Head of Marketing,
Communications & Events

"Communication is very important to BBF. It wraps around everything we do! It is vitally important as we maintain and develop relationships with our customers, partners, funders and stakeholders."

Business News 5 February 2015
Buckinghamshire Business First
YOUR LOCAL GROWTH HUB
Do you rank on the first page of search engine results or are you nowhere to be seen?
Read our handy guide to the basics of 'SEO' and ensure your business is top of the pops!
Read more
Focus on Social Media workshop
24 February Saunderton
Book here
£2.5m fund for small and medium sized
Maximum Velocity Growth grants of £50,000 are now available in Aylesbury Vale!
Rupert's Research Column: The facts that show why Buckinghamshire means business



Business News Matters

Our weekly e-newsletter not only provides invaluable information but also allows us to gather intelligence on businesses via the sector click links, through which we invite comment and feedback.

By inviting businesses to participate in surveys, provide feedback and ask questions, we gain more and more insights into what matters most to the business community in Buckinghamshire.

We will lead our partners, not only in understanding the needs and challenges of the businesses in Buckinghamshire but also in the intelligent analysis, summary and utilisation of this information. Information is only as useful as the decisions and actions taken as a result of having it.

The Buckinghamshire Business First Group

Our aim is to make Buckinghamshire the best place in Britain to start, run and grow a business.

Our machinery

Our unique structure allows us to maximise all opportunities to support Buckinghamshire businesses and allows us to be fleet of foot and maximise every chance to bring funding back to Buckinghamshire, an area which is often overlooked in favour of areas perceived to be more disadvantaged.

Not-for-profit

Surplus reserves are reinvested in new projects that benefit the local economy.



Our ethos

In accordance with our **brand values**, we **succeed together**, act with **integrity and fairness** and **make a real difference** to the people, businesses and communities we serve. We do this whilst maintaining the respect and confidence of our funders and shareholders.

We are entrepreneurial

Our mixed funding model means that we are not reliant on public subsidy and use the talent within our teams to support ourselves and other not-for-profit organisations.



Buckinghamshire Business First

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The contents of this document are correct at the time of publication but may be updated and re-issued at future times, as deemed appropriate.